

EXHIBIT

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DATE

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SB

423

**Fox, Susan**

**From:** Michelle Frodey-Hutchins [HutchinsM@ho.missoula.mt.us]  
**Sent:** Tuesday, April 03, 2007 10:05 AM  
**To:** Fox, Susan; marmiller@mt.gov  
**Subject:** testimony for SB 423

My testimony in support of SB 423 was too long for the online form. I could not find a fax number for submitting comments. Could one of you please submit the below testimony to the House Federal Regulations, Energy and Telecommunications Committee? Or please let me know if there is a better way to quickly submit our comments. Thank you!

The Missoula City-County Health Department, Water Quality District supports Senate Bill 423, which would revise laws relating to mercury-containing products.

Mercury is a toxic element which, when released into the environment, stays in the environment. It doesn't break down and go away over time, like some contaminants. Mercury bio-accumulates in fish, which represents the major route of exposure to humans. People in Montana should be able to eat fish – it's a healthy food, and fishing is a favorite pastime in this state. But people – children and pregnant women especially – are advised against eating many kinds of fish due to mercury contamination.

The biggest source of release into the environment is coal-fired power plants, but significant amounts are also released from various consumer and commercial products, some of which contain significant amounts of mercury. These high mercury-content items also can expose people directly to high levels of mercury when they are broken in homes or businesses, and people inhale or absorb the vapor.

In Missoula, we have tried to address this public health problem by offering free digital fever thermometers to people who bring in their mercury thermometers for recycling, and by working with a local HVAC wholesaler and some hardware stores to provide an easier way for people to recycle their old mercury thermostats. But this piecemeal approach doesn't necessarily work for most areas in the state, and the most efficient way would be to adopt this statewide legislation.

SB 423 represents a reasonable approach to limiting the public's exposure to mercury, by phasing out the sale of products that contain significant amounts of mercury and that have effective alternatives, labeling mercury-containing products so that people can make informed decisions about purchasing and disposal, and prohibiting disposal to help minimize the long-term release of mercury from landfills and incinerators. We urge you to support this important legislation.

Michelle Hutchins  
Environmental Health Specialist

4/3/2007

Missoula City-County Health Department  
Water Quality District

Michelle Hutchins  
Environmental Health Specialist  
Missoula City-County Health Dept.  
Water Quality District  
301 W. Alder St.  
Missoula, MT 59802  
(406) 258-3495

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Please give to your  
secretary for  
House Office